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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002349

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2016
TAGS: [EAIR IS KPKO LE MOPS PTER](#)
SUBJECT: MGLE01: FIGHTING ESCALATES AS ISRAEL STRIKES
AIRPORT AND HIZBALLAH ROCKET ATTACK KILLS ISRAELI CIVILIAN

REF: BEIRUT 2347

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) On the morning of July 13, Israel continued airstrikes on southern Lebanon, increasing the death toll to more than 30 civilian casualties. Israeli aircraft also bombed Beirut International Airport (BIA) and Hizballah targets in southern Beirut. BIA is closed until further notice. Hizballah launched Katyusha rockets at the Israeli town of Nahariyya. Israeli military liaison has warned UNIFIL not to move as it plans to intensify operations today.
End summary.

VIOLENCE ESCALATES

12. (C/NF) The following is a summary of events in Lebanon subsequent to reftel. Embassy contacted UN sources in country as well civil aviation officials. All times are approximate and in local time.

July 13

0000 Israeli airstrikes tapered off.

0430 Israel resumed airstikes on targets throughout southern Lebanon, including more bridges. UNIFIL observed an Israeli airstrike on the village of Zibqin (northeast of Naqoura). The village is known to support Hizballah, and UNIFIL believes many of Hizballah's fighters live there. UNIFIL sources tell us that Lebanese civilian deaths in southern Lebanon total more than 30. Lebanese television is showing gruesome footage of killed children.

0615 Israeli aircraft bombed Beirut International Airport (BIA). According to Director General of Civil Aviation Hamdi Chaouk, BIA's two main runways have been hit and are not operational. Chaouk could not give an estimate of how long repairs would take. BIA is closed until further notice. Civilian flights are being diverted to Cyprus. No casualties were reported at BIA.

0710 UNIFIL heard two impacts in the Israeli village of Nahariyya (just south of the Blue Line.)

0730 UNIFIL observed six Katyusha rockets impacting Nahariyya. About half an hour later, the Israeli military

announced that an Israeli civilian was killed in the barrage.

UNIFIL did not observe the rockets being launched, which suggests the rockets were launched from north of the UNIFIL AOR.

0817 Another explosion heard in Nahariyya.

0830 Press reported that that Israeli aircraft hit the Al Manar (Hizballah-run) television station building in the southern suburbs of Beirut and that six people were injured. However, a trusted Shia journalist who lives in south Beirut told the Embassy that a building near the Al Manar building was hit instead. (As of 1030, Al Manar was still broadcasting live.) A Hizballah official told the media that the southern suburbs were hit by Israeli airstrikes but did not elaborate on what was struck.

0830 UNIFIL reported sporadic exchanges of gunfire at various points along the Blue Line, and Israeli helicopters operating over southern Lebanon. UNIFIL still has not observed any Israeli ground troops inside Lebanon (with the exception of a lone tank yesterday.)

0900 The Defense Attache has received reports that Israel struck a bridge near Damour, the main bridge on the highway leading to Sidon and the south from Beirut. In addition, DAO personnel observed ships and boats evacuating Beirut Port. The port is closed until further notice. There are unconfirmed reports of an Israeli naval blockade of Lebanon.

0945 UNIFIL reports that sporadic gunfire is continuing but there are no Israeli airstikes at the moment.

ON THE HORIZON: MORE ESCALATION

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13. (C/NF) UN Political Officer Georges Nasr told econoff at 1000 hrs. local that Israeli military liaison sent a message to UNIFIL commander Maj. Gen. Alain Pellegrini that the IDF intends to intensify its operations. The message also advised UNIFIL forces not to move. In particular, UNIFIL was warned not to use the Echo Road, a road that runs parallel to the Blue Line. UNIFIL peacekeepers are now bunkered down, a position that Nasr admitted may limit their ability to monitor the action.
FELTMAN